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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000154

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/15/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [YI](#) [KOC](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: RHETORIC IN BRATISLAVA OVERSHADOWS KUBIS IN  
BELGRADE

REF: A. BRATISLAVA 146

[1](#)B. STATE 31796

Classified By: DCM Lawrence R. Silverman for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: FM Jan Kubis in Belgrade March 12 told Serb leaders that there was no alternative to the Ahtisaari plan and that he was confident of EU unity. Kubis was struck by the Serbs' non-aggressive attitude and the lack of mention of Russia, though others in the MFA believe this is a tactic orchestrated by Russia itself. Slovak PolDir has consultations in Moscow March 15-16 and promised a read-out; in turn he would like to know the latest U.S. thinking on Russia's stance. Kubis committed Slovakia to remain silent on final status at the March 19 UNSC meeting on Kosovo, and asked for advance notice of what the U.S. planned to say. Meanwhile, the parliamentary foreign affairs committee debated Kosovo final status March 14. Three parties (SDKU, SNS, and KDH) agreed to draft a joint resolution, which should be ready for consideration by the foreign affairs committee March 22. Three other parties (Smer, HZDS, and SMK) advocate "leaving diplomacy to the diplomats" and probably will not support the resolution. Post launched another round of meetings with party leaders to press the need for a quick settlement fully supported by Slovakia in the EU and UNSC. We will provide recommendations separately regarding phone calls to Slovak politicians, but note that Dzurinda's advisors believe Merkel would be the most effective interlocutor with Dzurinda. End summary.

Kubis in Belgrade

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[1](#)2. (C) Foreign Minister Jan Kubis told the Ambassador March 14 that he found Serbian leaders open to his message during his March 12 visit. He told Tadic and Kostunica that there was no alternative to the Ahtisaari plan, and that he was confident of EU unity in the end. The Serbian leadership is expecting and waiting for the UNSCR on Kosovo, even though they don't like it. Kubis reported that PM Kostunica told him with a smile, "I have the impression Kosovo is in Slovakia, based on what I see from your country." Kubis said the Serbs were trying to buy time to get a better deal by using legal and diplomatic efforts, i.e., lobbying UNSC and UNGA members for the most concessions possible. Kubis told the Serbs that Slovakia could be helpful on specific, individual points, but would not seek to change the fundamentals of the Ahtisaari plan.

Thoughts on Russia's Role

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[1](#)3. (C) Kubis said that the Serbian leaders were not

aggressive. They did not use strong rhetoric and did not mention Russia, which he took to be a good sign. MFA PolDir Miroslav Lajcak (strictly protect) later told us that he was more cynical and believed this tactic was orchestrated by Moscow. He characterized the March 13 Russian MFA statement as "very bad, very hard." Lajcak theorized that the Russians believe that if they give in now, they will be seen as "a joke." They therefore feel compelled to block the process, and will wait until the last possible moment for the U.S. to beg them not to do so. Lajcak will be in Moscow for consultations March 15-16 and promised to debrief DCM upon his return to Bratislava. (Guidance request: In turn, we would like to share with Lajcak our latest thinking on the Russian position. Please advise.)

#### Kubis vs. Kasicky

14. (C) Kubis was livid at Defense Minister Frantisek Kasicky's statement during his March 12 press conference with visiting Serbian Defense Minister Stankovic (ref a). He said he phoned Kasicky with a strong message that he should not presume to speak for the government on Kosovo because he didn't know the state of play. Kubis is certain he has Prime Minister Robert Fico's support on this issue, although he still cannot tell us for certain where his boss will come out. Kasicky said he had based his statement based on other government positions he had seen in the media. Lajcak speculated that in trying to do what he assumed would please PM Fico, Kasicky had been "extremely damaging." (Comment: He is right. Former PM Dzurinda's SDKU has been citing Kasicky as supporting the SDKU line.) According to an MFA desk officer who was present at the March 13 meeting between Kubis and Stankovic, Kubis tried to set the record straight and reiterated the points he had made in Belgrade. Stankovic reportedly responded, "Whatever you finally decide, we won't be angry with you."

#### Kubis on March 19 UNSC Discussion

15. (C) Per ref b, Ambassador urged Kubis to be either supportive of Ahtisaari or silent at the March 19 UNSC discussion on Kosovo. Kubis immediately understood the message. He said that although Slovakia sometimes had critical comments on UNMIK reports, Slovakia would say nothing about final status negotiations. Given the expected debate on Kosovo in the Slovak parliament March 20, he knows what is at stake. (Request: Kubis very much wants to know what we will say at the March 19 meeting. It would be useful to have something we could pass to Kubis before he leaves for Central Asia March 18.)

#### Politicians Have a Hey-Day

16. (C) The parliamentary foreign affairs committee met March 14 to discuss the government's foreign policy priorities for 2007 (as presented by Kubis) and debate the three draft parliamentary resolutions on Kosovo (Kubis was present for the first part of this debate, but after two hours had to leave). Former PM and Slovak Christian and Democratic Union (SDKU) leader Mikulas Dzurinda said he believed Slovakia could move the EU on the Kosovo question, just as it had moved the EU position on opening accession talks with Croatia. Slovak National Party (SNS) MP Jozef Rydlo proposed that SNS and SDKU consolidate their proposals into one united statement that could be accepted by all parliamentary parties. Christian Democrat Movement chair Pavol Hrusovsky said that Slovakia must never accept an agreement that Serbia does not agree to, emphasizing that being a responsible UNSC member meant, at a minimum, abstaining. At the end of a two-hour long heated discussion, SNS, SDKU, and the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) agreed to form a drafting committee to work over the weekend on a consolidated resolution that would be debated in the plenary session that begins March 20. Dzurinda advisor Milan Jezovica told DCM that he expected the drafting exercise to produce a resolution weaker than the current SDKU draft. He said all agree the resolution would not be binding, at least from a legal perspective.

Not All is Lost

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17. (C) Smer MP Juraj Horvath stated simply and firmly that parliament had no business discussing the issue, let alone dictating what should be done. He said Smer's position was to leave diplomacy to the diplomats at the MFA. MP and former FM Zdenka Kramplova of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) said her party would not join onto the drafting effort at this time, as the government and not the parliament was responsible for foreign policy. Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) MP Jozef Berenyi criticized politicians use of Kosovo to inflame anti-Hungarian sentiments among Slovaks, and said Slovakia must unite with other EU countries to support Ahtisaari's plan.

Comment: Next steps

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18. (C) Following the March 14 debate, Post launched another round of consultations with political party insiders to once again press on the need for a quick settlement fully supported by Slovakia in the EU and UNSC. We believe it is necessary to shore up the resolve of Smer, HZDS, and SMK, and express appreciation for the responsible stances they are taking on this issue. Likewise, it is necessary to continue expressing to members of SDKU, KDH, and SNS that their rhetoric designed for internal political gain damages both their image abroad and, more importantly, threatens stability in the Balkans. During discussions March 15, SMK reiterated its intention to continue expressing full support for Ahtisaari and seek EU unity. KDH MP Fronc expressed grave misgivings about Kosovo independence, but listened attentively to our arguments and promised to discuss the issue within the party. He said the parties would definitely bring a resolution to the floor, but assured us it would be non-binding. Jezovica said the most effective foreign overture to Dzurinda to moderate his stance would come from Chancellor Merkel, if she is so inclined.

19. (C) Dzurinda told media that he expects to have a parliamentary resolution draft ready for consideration by the foreign affairs committee March 22, though it is still unclear what it will say. Nor is it clear when exactly it will be on the plenary agenda, as Speaker Pavol Paska (Smer) has been reluctant to allow the debate and could use procedural tactics to delay. PM Fico told the Ambassador that Smer, HZDS, and SMK had enough votes to block a resolution supported by SNS, SDKU, and KDH. However, that presumes that all MPs show up when they are supposed to and vote strictly along party lines. FM Kubis has said privately he does not fear a parliamentary debate or even a resolution, as long as it is not binding and does not say Slovakia should oppose any solution to which the Serbs do not agree. He views it as "letting off steam." However, it could have the effect of making Fico feel that he has been boxed into a corner if it leads to an outpouring of public opinion against the Ahtisaari plan for final status. Our message to all leaders is that Slovakia cannot manifest its concern for the Serbs or the desire to score political points through an abstention at the UNSC. Anything other than a "yes" would damage the country's interests, while doing nothing for the Serbs.

VALLEE